



NEWS RELEASE

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Wisconsin Ports Advance Statewide Maritime Priorities at Annual Meeting in Green Bay *Port leaders call for a new Wisconsin Maritime Plan and sustained state and federal investment*

GREEN BAY, WI – Leaders representing Wisconsin's commercial ports convened in Green Bay on Thursday, September 10 and Friday, September 11 for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Commercial Ports Association ("WCPA" or "Wisconsin Ports"), renewing a statewide conversation about the economic importance, infrastructure needs and future competitiveness of Wisconsin's maritime industry.

Hosted by the Port of Green Bay, the Annual Meeting brought together port directors and maritime stakeholders with local, state and federal leaders to discuss infrastructure investment, freight transportation, economic development, environmental stewardship and emerging opportunities for Wisconsin's ports. The gathering also marked the election of Port Milwaukee Director Benjamin (Benji) Timm as President of the WCPA.

"Wisconsin's ports are essential economic infrastructure, connecting our manufacturers, farmers and businesses with domestic and international markets," said **Benji Timm, Director of Port Milwaukee and President of the WCPA**. "The WCPA Annual Meeting gives Wisconsin's port communities an important opportunity to speak with one voice about the investments and policies needed to keep our maritime economy competitive. I am honored to serve as President and look forward to building upon the Association's strong record of advocacy and collaboration."

Surrounded by Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Mississippi River, Wisconsin occupies a unique position in the North American maritime transportation system. The state's commercial ports move agricultural commodities, raw materials, construction materials, manufactured products and other cargo critical to Wisconsin industry, while supporting shipbuilding and repair, tourism, waterfront development and thousands of jobs throughout the state.

"Green Bay has a proud maritime history, and we were pleased to welcome port leaders from across Wisconsin back to our community," said **Dean Haen, Director of the Port of Green Bay**. "Our ports are closely connected to the strength of Wisconsin agriculture, manufacturing, and construction, moving the commodities that help build our communities and infrastructure. Continued investment in docks, navigation channels, rail and roadway connections, and other maritime infrastructure allows Wisconsin businesses to compete while creating opportunities for economic growth in communities throughout the state."





At its Annual Meeting, the WCPA reaffirmed a policy agenda focused on maintaining and modernizing Wisconsin's maritime transportation system. Priorities include sustained investment in port and harbor infrastructure; efficient multimodal freight connections; dredging and navigation reliability; environmental stewardship and waterfront resilience; support for maritime workforce development and shipbuilding; and stronger coordination among local, state and federal partners.

Central to that agenda is a call for the State of Wisconsin to develop a new comprehensive Wisconsin Maritime Plan. The WCPA believes a statewide plan should assess Wisconsin's existing maritime assets and freight flows, identify infrastructure and investment needs, strengthen connections among ports and other transportation modes, and establish a long-term strategy for growing maritime commerce on Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Mississippi River.

"Wisconsin's maritime economy extends from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, and each of our ports has an important role in the state's transportation network," said **Nate Gilberts, City Planner for the Port of Prairie du Chien**. "A new Wisconsin Maritime Plan can help us look beyond individual projects and communities and establish a coordinated vision for the entire state. Wisconsin should be deliberate about how we maintain our existing maritime assets, prepare for future freight opportunities and ensure that ports of every size can contribute to statewide economic growth."

Wisconsin Ports also reaffirmed strong and enduring support for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Harbor Assistance Program (HAP) and the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, which have provided critical state funding for harbor infrastructure, waterfront communities and responsible stewardship of Wisconsin's maritime resources.

At the federal level, the Association continues to support robust investment through the U.S. Department of Transportation Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) and full utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to maintain safe and reliable navigation infrastructure. Together, these state and federal programs leverage local and private investment and allow Wisconsin ports to modernize facilities, maintain navigation, improve freight efficiency and position the state for continued economic growth.

"Wisconsin's ports have demonstrated that strategic public resources can unlock significant private investment and create lasting economic value," **Timm** added. "Our message coming out of Green Bay is straightforward: Wisconsin is a maritime state. With a clear statewide strategy and sustained investment in our ports, we can strengthen Wisconsin agriculture and manufacturing, support our nationally significant shipbuilding industry and ensure our communities remain connected to markets throughout North America and the world."

About Wisconsin Ports and the WCPA

Surrounded by Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Mississippi River, Wisconsin is essential to maritime transportation in the United States. Wisconsin's ports contribute to the state's economy and enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of the state's waterfront communities. The mission of Wisconsin Ports is to promote and grow the maritime economy of the entire state. The WCPA serves as the public voice, organizational advocate and go-to resource on the importance of Wisconsin's port industry. Additional information is available at WisconsinPorts.com.

